



CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NORTHAMPTON
MASSACHUSETTS

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- Gina Louise Sciarra, Ward 4
- David A. Murphy, Ward 5
- Marianne L. LaBarge, Ward 6
- Alisa F. Klein, Ward 7

Meeting Minutes

Annual Budget Hearings with City Departments

Location: Northampton Police Station Community Room, 29 Center Street

Meeting Date: May 25, 2016

Meeting Time: 5:30 pm

1. Roll Call: At 5:30 p.m. Councilor O'Donnell called the meeting to order. On a roll call the following councilors were present: Councilor O'Donnell, Councilor Bidwell, Councilor Sciarra, Councilor Murphy and Councilor LaBarge. No other City Councilors were present.

Also present was Mayor David Narkewicz and Finance Director Susan Wright.

2. Budget Presentations by Department:

Councilor LaBarge moved to open the Budget Hearings; Councilor Sciarra seconded the motion. The motion was approved on a voice vote of 5 Yes, 0 No.

- A. 5:30 p.m. Fire Rescue: Chief Duane Nichols and Deputy Chief and Deputy Chief John Garriepy were present from the department.

Chief Nichols explained that his budget is a level funded budget for FY17, as was directed by the Mayor. The department's overall budget for next year is slightly less due primarily to retirements. There are sixty-eight uniform members within the department. Last year the department received 7,200 calls for service; of those, 5,100 were for EMS. Overall the department experienced 400 more calls than the previous year; the Chief reports that call volume continues to rise from year-to-year primarily due to EMS requests. The department is the 24/7 backup first responders to other surrounding communities.

PS accounts for a majority of the department's budget. Retirements last year included former Chief Duggan and Deputy Chief Dave Gagne; replacement staff were added at a lower step rate than the retired members. New fire fighters are generally brought in at a Step 1 level.

On the OM side, two line items were increased: EMS Supplies and Fire Fighting Supplies. The Fire Fighting Supplies was formerly budgeted at \$2,500; however, spending outpaces this budgeted amount. The Chief bumped the budgeted amount up to \$15,000 which better reflects the spending amount over

the past few years. Purchase covered by this line item includes nozzles, fire hoses, axes, etc. EMS supply purchases have also outpaced the budgeted amount. This is due to two primary reasons: first, the number of calls for EMS has risen in the past few years; second, replacement of supplies has shifted to the department as CDH now only supplies medical drugs for ambulance calls. The budgeted amount is now at the \$10,000 level.

DC Garriepy explained that over the past year there has been a 1,000% increase in the use of Narcan by EMS. The Narcan is supplied by the hospital; however, when the drug is administered, other supplies are consumed in the process. Equipment, such as masks, defibrillator pads, etc., is consumed in the process. Cardiac arrests have increased due to the increase in heroin use. One cardiac arrest could consume \$500 worth of medical supplies. Overall, with the current call volume, an average of \$100 in medical supplies is consumed per EMS call. Medical supplies used per call are billed to the patient. Years ago both medical supplies and medical drugs were re-stocked by the CDH. Various shifts over the years, including an increase in call volume, have resulted in the department having to re-stock supplies while drugs are still provided by the hospital.

The EMS industry is expecting a 7% increase in call volume from year to year. DC Garriepy reports that the increased call volume is due to increased heroin use and also due to the number of calls for assisted living medical needs (lift assists due to falls, etc.). Older populations are the result of assisted living quarters at Rockridge retirement community, Linda Manor, and Christopher Heights.

Ambulance replacements are now funded through the department's budget instead of the capital plan. Ambulance replacements will occur every two years.

As part of the service offered by the City residents can register themselves with the Dispatch Center for medical needs/concerns. When a crew is dispatched out, the needs of a patient will be on file. This service is also available to register other important information about the premises. The information will remain confidential and will not be broadcast over the radio. There are calls in which the department always dispatches an engine and an ambulance because of the pre-registered information kept by Dispatch.

The department has also been focusing on using information technology for numerous tasks, including records keeping of patient history, inventory control, and department scheduling. Mobile hot spots have been added to ambulances and trucks to allow for real-time data exchange.

The department currently has eleven first responders; with retirements next year the department will be down to only five. The department only hires paramedics which is a requirement of the job.

The plan for a new fire engine is on-going. A committee is working to identify the specs for the new engine; the committee plans to visit other communities to consider appropriate add-ons for the City; one feature the Chief is planning for is a compressed air foam system. This fire suppression technology will benefit low/no water wards like wards 6 and 7. The new engine is expected to hold 1,000 gallons of water. A compressed air foam system provides for triple the amount of fire suppression; the 1,000 gallons will yield 3,000 gallons of fire suppression.

Chief notes that the EMS equipment is starting to get old. He would like to plan to cycle out the old equipment with new equipment. He would also like to increase the hardware/software capability to incorporate more technology into the hands of personnel.

Chief Nichols reports that the Florence substation is a huge asset when responding to calls in the Florence and Leeds area. While administrative offices are at the main location on King Street, the Florence station is well equipped to respond to most types of emergencies. While the building is older, structurally it is in good shape; through a FEMA grant a new sprinkler system was added to the building.

Regarding new hires, the Chief reports that when postings go up, there is always a list of candidates to draw from. The pool of candidates is only so big, however, and other communities have lured staff to

other communities with higher pay. The department does try to hire local people who might be willing to invest a longer time commitment to the community. Less than half of the staff are Northampton residents.

The name change is still on-going. It is well accepted by the department; the rescue truck that was acquired in December was the first truck to carry the new logo. All new equipment going forward will reflect Northampton Fire Rescue.

At 6:03 p.m. the City Council took a brief adjournment until the start time of the Central Services presentation.

B. 6:10 p.m. Central Services:

At 6:10 p.m. Councilor O'Donnell called the meeting back to order. Presenting the Parking Maintenance and the Central Services budget was Central Services Director David Pomerantz. Director Pomerantz reports that there are no changes to the levels of service for either budget.

There is about a 2.6% increase to the Central Services budget for FY2017, mostly in the Operations and Maintenance portion of the budget. Some of the numbers may change on the PS side due primarily to collective bargaining agreements that have yet to be determined. There is currently a staff of fourteen people in Central Services; there is also a weekend custodial position for JFK Middle School that is funded out of the Central Services budget. The position is 19.5 hours and covers weekends when the Aquatics Center and the gymnasium are open. Director Pomerantz reports that there is a lot of cost sharing that is done between cost centers, including the City, NPS, DPW and SVAHS. The positions that are shared include a City Electrician, an HVAC tech, a Facilities Project Coordinator, and Mail Courier.

Contracts for Electricity service were signed for City and School facilities in October of 2015. They are two year contracts and the City was able to secure rates that are 2 cents per kw hour less than what was paid under the previous twelve month contract. This is helpful for budgeting purposes; staff continue to push energy conservation and efficiency. The City has also signed two year contracts for natural gas which reflects about one cent less per dekatherm over the previous contract.

The City is ready to begin the street light conversion project. The project consists of converting approx. 2,000 City Streetlights to L.E.D. lamps and fixtures. Right now the City owns about 85% of the streetlights; the city will be looking to purchase the remaining 15% in the not-to-distant future. This project is funded through bonds; the City has secured about \$1,000,000 for this project. Director Pomerantz expects that once the project is complete, the City should expect approx. \$190,000 in rebates from National Grid as part of the work. A five-year payback is expected on the entire project. The project is expected to save the City approx. \$120,000 in savings annually. The City will be taking over maintenance of the streetlights as part of the program. Other communities have indicated that maintenance is pretty minimal. The City does have a bucket truck that will be able to be used once the City begins its own maintenance.

Director Pomerantz reports that there is a slight increase in the line item for Contracted and Preventative Maintenance Services. There are also a number of centralized purchasing programs that the City has instituted in the last four – five years. The centralization has resulted in significant cost savings to the City. The programs include: office supply purchasing; copier leasing (City only), custodial supply purchasing; postage services; trash services; and security access purchasing.

Director Pomerantz also reports that Alternative Recycling will continue trash services for the next three years at the same prices as the previous contract. This means that the City will not have to prepare an RFP or go through the bid process. The services include trash pick-up, recycling, and composting at three of the City schools.

In the Parking Budget, there are no real changes to the dollar side. There is one position that was added to the budget: Tom Willard, a former B.I.D. employee, has been hired as a Parking Maintenance

Assistant; he has picked up 100% of the duties that he was doing for the B.I.D. and Chamber program. He will also start to train on some of the Parking Maintenance duties.

Under previous departmental budgets there was a line item for "B.I.D. payments" totaling about \$35,000 per year. This is the amount that the City paid to the B.I.D. for services that they provided. A portion of that amount has been moved up to the PS line to help cover the cost of Mr. Willard's salary. The remainder of the money is used to cover equipment purchases that the City might need to make to perform the duties done by Mr. Willard.

Mr. Pomerantz explained other line items that were part of his Parking Maintenance budget. "Compliance" consists of purchases of miscellaneous equipment, such as fire extinguishers, signage for the garage, tools, etc. "Site improvements" includes painting, crack sealing, landscaping and other improvements to the lots and garages. "Equipment – Parking" includes purchases for meter components, coin collection equipment, paper, as well as repair to the green multi-station.

Councilor Bidwell asked if there was still time to look at alternatives in the L.E.D. lighting program. His constituent, James Lowenthal, has a petition that is signed by a number of individuals. While Director Pomerantz indicated that there still may be time; Chris Mason is still doing the sample placement on Pleasant Street, Randolph Place and on Holyoke Street. An on-line survey is being conducted to get feedback from the community because this is a big change. Chris has spent time with Mr. Lowenthal and with Siemens (installers of the new fixtures) to identify what is best for the City. Finance Director Susan Wright expressed an interest in finalizing the purchase for two specific reasons. First, the projected energy cost savings are already built into the FY17 budget. Second, the City bonded \$700,000 last year and the money is supposed to be spent within a certain period of time.

Councilor Bidwell asked about the possibility to shield streetlights. In taking over maintenance of the streetlights, he wondered if shielding will still be able to be done at individual requests. Director Pomerantz reports that National Grid was asked and the City paid for NG to install shields upon request. As part of the request from the resident, the resident purchased the shield. The work was typically done at night when other maintenance on streetlights was also being done.

Councilor Sciarra asked about the installation of PV canopy systems on municipal parking lots. Director Pomerantz explained that installing photovoltaic systems on municipal parking lots is part of a grant that Energy Officer Chris Mason is working on. The engineering portion of the project is complete; a system is planned for the main Fire Rescue headquarter parking lot on Carlon Drive. The idea is to increase the resiliency of the building in a power failure. Solar on the roof was considered initially, however, the building has a copper roof. A canopy system is a good alternative and will be considered for the Senior Center, school parking lots and the main Fire Rescue headquarters. The structure will consist of pv panels supported by pillars with parking allowed underneath the panels. The project will require that a 1,000 gallon underground storage tank for diesel fuel be taken out. The Fire Rescue vehicles will be required to re-fuel at the DPW.

Councilor Sciarra asked about the pv project at the former Glendale Road Landfill. Director Pomerantz indicated that a contract has been signed with Ameresco. Ameresco has agreed to perform certain steps in the development of the project until the state legislature lifts the cap on net metering to the point where this project would be included in the net metering pipeline.

At 6:38 Councilor Sciarra moved to close the public hearing; Councilor Bidwell seconded the motion. The motion was approved on a voice vote of 5 Yes, 0 No.

3. Adjourn:

Councilor Sciarra moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:38 p.m.; Councilor Bidwell seconded the motion. The motion was approved on a voice vote of 5 Yes, 0 No.

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